

# STRAFFORD EDD COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

# UPDATE '23

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Strafford Regional Planning Commission would like to thank our partners from the public, private, non-profit, and higher education sectors for their support and involvement throughout the project solicitation and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update processes. We are grateful for your time and expertise, and we value your contributions. We would also like to thank the US Economic Development Administration for their support, and Alan Brigham and Katherine Trapani of the EDA Philadelphia Regional Office for their advice and technical guidance. The following people contributed to this report:

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### STRAFFORD EDD STRATEGY COMMITTEE

The Strafford Economic Development District Strategy Committee provides advice and guidance to the Strafford EDD, the CEDS, and its priority project list. It represents the private sector, public officials, community leaders, and representatives of workforce development, higher education, and labor groups. It unites the region and provides an opportunity for collaboration, leadership, and program development. The Strategy Committee will forge strategic alliances and communicate the region's needs and opportunities in the future.

**Table 1: Strafford Economic Development District Strategy Committee Members**

Member	Entity Representing
Reid Amy	City of Dover
James Burdin	City of Dover
Cliff Blake	Dover Arts Commission
Paul Giuliano	Great Bay Community College
Robin Comstock	City of Somersworth
Michelle Mears	City of Somersworth

Warren Daniel	Small Business Development Center
Charlie French	UNH Cooperative Extension
Barbara Holstein	SRPC Commissioner, City of Rochester
Margaret Joyce	Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce
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Stephanie Verdile	NH Office of Planning and Development
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Nicole Zoltko	Town of New Durham
Joe Friedman	Town of Durham
Tory Jennison	Strafford County
Tina Kasim	Senator Shaheen's Office
Nate Bernitz	UNH Cooperative Extension
Katrin Kasper	Town of Lee, Clean Energy NH

## STRAFFORD EDD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The full body of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission as determined by RSA 36:46 also serves as the Strafford EDD Board of Directors. The Strafford EDD Board of Directors is responsible for approving the final CEDS based on input from SRPC staff, the Strategy Committee, and the general public.

**Barrington:** Steve Diamond,  
Matthew Towne

**Durham:** Leslie Schwartz,  
Wayne Burton

**Madbury:** Mark Avery, Tom  
Crosby

**New Durham:** *Vacant*

**Brookfield:** Ed Comeau

**Farmington:** William Fisher

**Middleton:** Janet Hotchkiss,  
Jon Hotchkiss

**Newmarket:** Lisa Henderson,  
Peter Nelson

**Dover:** Dave Landry, Lindsey  
Williams, Sophie Robinson

**Lee:** Mary Woodward, Katrin  
Kasper

**Milton:** John Nute, Karen  
Golab

**Northwood:** Scott Martin



**Nottingham:** Charlene  
Anderson, Gary Anderson

**Somersworth:** Mark  
Richardson, Michael  
Bobinsky, Chris Horton

**Rochester:** Barb Holstein,  
Donald Hamann, Joe  
Boudreau

**Strafford:** Donald Coker

**Rollinsford:** *Vacant*

**Wakefield:** Victor Vinagro

# INTRODUCTION

Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire. SRPC provides technical planning assistance to its municipalities, which include the communities of Strafford County plus Brookfield and Wakefield in Carroll County and Newmarket, Northwood, and Nottingham in Rockingham County. SRPC also provides regional transportation planning and technical assistance services to these communities through its designation as the Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization (Strafford MPO). SRPC was designated as the Strafford Economic Development District (Strafford EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the US Department of Commerce in 2015. The Strafford EDD comprises the municipalities of Strafford County plus Brookfield and Wakefield. Newmarket, Northwood, and Nottingham are part of the EDD operated by the Regional Economic Development Center in Rockingham County. The Strafford EDD maintains a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to establish and promote our region's economic development priorities. See Map 1 for the boundaries of the SRPC and EDD.

SRPC adopted its first CEDS in 2011 and has continued to update the document on a five-year cycle. The 2021-2025 CEDS outlines a regional strategy for future economic development and prosperity based on the themes and goals developed by the Strategy Committee. This 2023 CEDS acts as our second annual update to that plan. It provides an analysis of the region's economy, updates to the priority project list, and an evaluation of our progress in implementing the CEDS and the operation of the Strafford EDD.

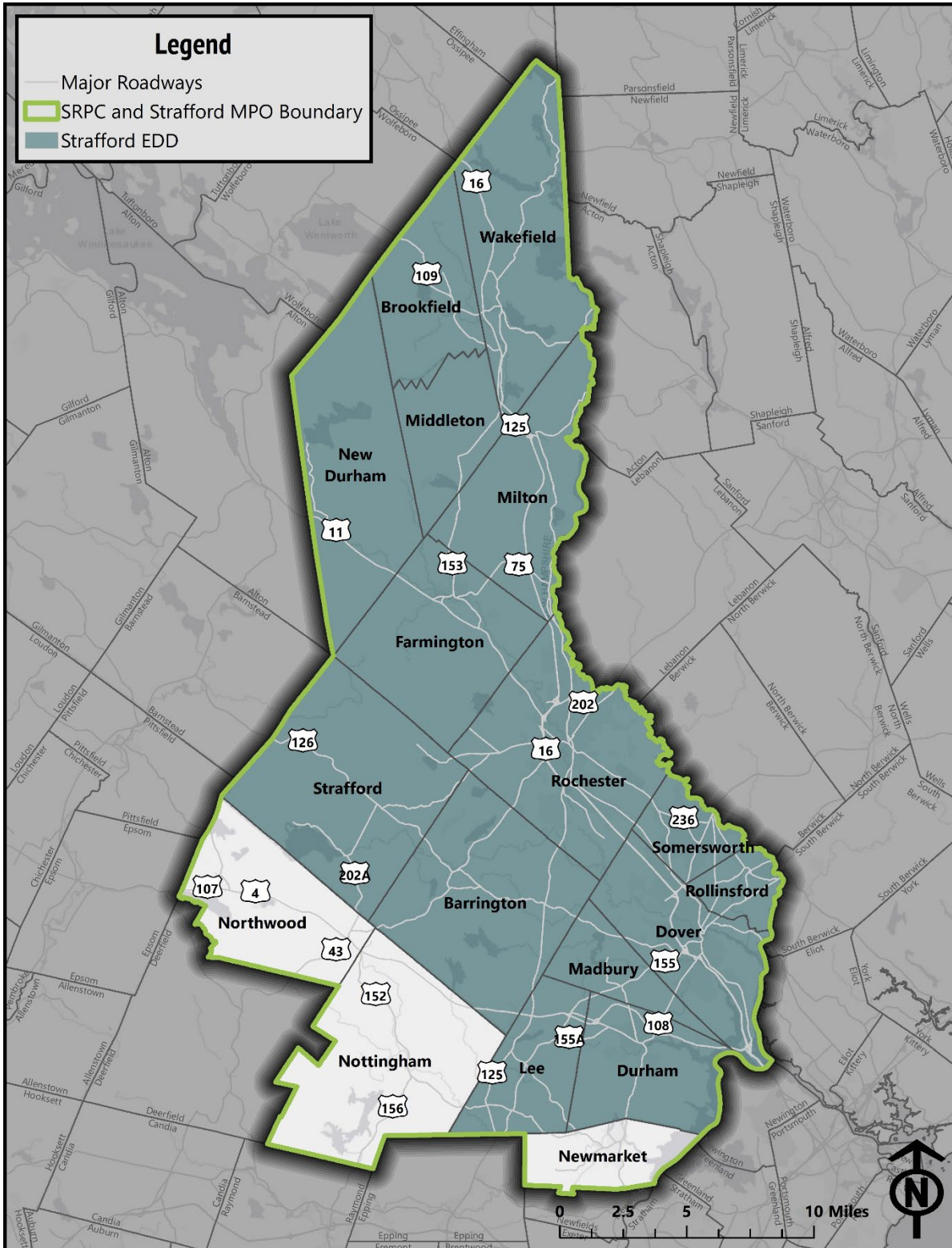
SRPC staff began data collection and outreach for this update in winter 2022. SRPC staff convened a network of economic development stakeholders and technical experts called the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders, which originally met in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. SRPC staff leveraged 4 meetings of the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders for the purpose of acting as the SRPC CEDS Strategy Committee.

As with any planning effort, data is a key component. It must be noted that data cannot always be analyzed for the exact region of the Strafford EDD if the original source data is compiled for different geographies. When data for the Strafford EDD is not available, the "SRPC region" or "Strafford MPO" refers to the jurisdictions of SRPC and the Strafford MPO as shown in Figure 1. If county data is available, Strafford County is used as an approximation of Strafford EDD, but data is also provided for Carroll and Rockingham Counties where possible.

SRPC Staff conducted project solicitation from February through April 2023. Notifications and project forms were sent to all municipalities in the region, as well as a variety of other public- and non-profit sector partners. Those projects are included in the second half of this update.

A full draft of this plan was released for public comment on May 11, 2023. Copies of the plan were made available to the public at the Dover, Somersworth, and Rochester public libraries and city halls. The plan was also available on the SRPC website, and comments were solicited from both the Strafford EDD Strategy Committee and Strafford EDD Board of Directors during this period. No comments were received in the 30-day period. The Strafford EDD Board of Directors adopted this strategy at its June 16, 2023 meeting following the public comment and review period.

Map 1: Strafford Region and Economic Development District





# STRAFFORD CEDS VISION AND THEMES

This update summarizes the progress our region is making in achieving the goals and themes established in the 2021-2025 CEDS:



**Economic Growth** – Promote the economic success of our region, including overall employment, business growth, and business expansion.



**Business Operations** – Understand how changing workplace dynamics like telework, flexible scheduling, supply chains, and industry clusters will impact our region.



**Housing** – Assure that our region has available, affordable, and quality housing to attract and retain a qualified workforce and for attracting new businesses.



**Infrastructure** – Plan and advocate for physical improvements such as water, sewer, utilities, and broadband that are resilient and responsive to our region's needs.



**Mobility and Accessibility** – Encourage community development that creates a high-quality experience of being in and moving around our communities for people of all ages and abilities, and for all modes of transportation.



**Age Friendliness** – Promote community development that is responsive to residents of all ages and abilities to allow the growing population of older residents to remain in our region as they age while also attracting and supporting younger families with school-aged children.



**Workforce and Education** – Understand the strengths of our region's workforce and encourage opportunities for all residents to access the education, training, or re-training that they need to pursue their careers in a dynamic job market. Promote educational environments that are sources of entrepreneurs, start-up businesses, and new intellectual property.



**Community Vibrancy** – Consider the strengths of our region and communities that make them attractive to businesses, residents, and visitors, including downtowns and the built environment; natural resources; tourism attractors; and local recreation and entertainment.



**Childcare** – Ensure that our region has an adequate supply of affordable and quality childcare to support our workforce and prepare our children for the future.

## CEDS LENSES

Three overarching principles, or lenses, will be used to weigh the impacts of the actions in this CEDS update: 1) equity and environmental justice; 2) resiliency; and 3) partnership and collaboration. These lenses will impact many, if not all, of the themes addressed above.

**Equity and Environmental Justice** – The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the region's economic priorities and opportunities and their resulting impacts on our communities and environment.

**Resiliency** – Prepare for economic disruptions by 1) lessening the likelihood of their occurrence, 2) mitigating the negative impacts if a disruption does occur, and 3) improving the region's ability to recover quickly and fully from disruptions. This lens includes significant discussion of our region's response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2023 CEDS contains a resiliency chapter that documents resiliency activities undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Partnership and Collaboration** – The 15 municipalities within the Strafford EDD are economically interdependent with each other and neighboring communities in NH, ME, and MA. Forging and supporting partnerships and collaboration as we implement this plan makes us stronger.

## THE REGION'S DEMOGRAPHICS

SRPC's *Regional Data Snapshot* contains region-wide analyses of various demographics, indicators, and performance measures that inform all of SRPC's core planning areas. First adopted in 2021, the *Regional Data Snapshot* serves as a central collection of metrics related to regional planning. This approach allows for an in-depth description of each metric, while also promoting interdisciplinary data analyses and conclusions by juxtaposing a wide variety of quantitative and spatial datasets. The *2023 Regional Data Snapshot* includes the most current publicly available data for metrics contained in the earlier editions and adds new metrics from the recently completed Regional Housing Needs Assessment, as well as the addition of Community Profiles for each municipality. Many of these metrics act as economic indicators and are incorporated herein by reference. The *2023 Regional Data Snapshot* can be found on SRPC's website at <http://strafford.org/docs/regional-data-snapshot-2023/>.

The *2023 Regional Data Snapshot* includes the first data releases from the 2020 Census, which indicates that the total population of the Strafford EDD is 136,845 residents, up approximately 6.1 percent from 2010, and the NH Office of Planning and Development projects that this number will continue to grow to just over 150,000 by 2040. Median ages for all but two SRPC municipalities have risen or held steady, and residents aged 55 and older continue to be the largest growing share of the region's population. While the region is still comparatively younger than other parts of the state and New Hampshire as a whole, this aging population has implications for many of our key themes, particularly in terms of demand for housing and an available workforce. For more detailed information and in-depth analysis of the region's demographics, please see the *2023 Regional Data Snapshot*.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

Over the past year, the region has experienced low unemployment and an increase in labor force participation – both of which are positive economic indicators. However, like the rest of the nation, economic uncertainty continues to impact residents and businesses due to factors such as inflation.

### GOALS



Support economic growth in the region, including attraction, retention, and expansion of businesses, as well as investments and employment in the region through inclusive growth and regional collaboration.

### CURRENT TRENDS

Much like the conditions experienced during the 2022 CEDS update, inflation continued to rise over the past year (see Figure 1). In response, the Federal Reserve implemented a total of 7 interest rate hikes from March 2022 to December 2022, adding up to 4.25 percentage points (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> While recent indicators have shown a slight slowdown in the rising cost of goods and services, analysts predict that inflation and additional interest rate increases throughout 2023 may lead to a potential recession in the near future.

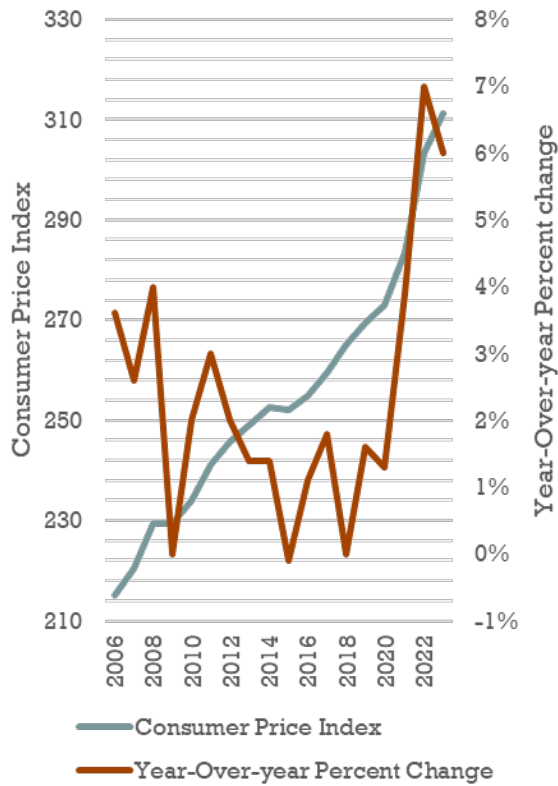
Meanwhile, unemployment in the region has remained low, with a 2.21% unemployment rate in December 2022 (Figure 3). Similarly, labor force participation continues to steadily recover but is still slightly lower (at 89,500 as of December 2022) than in February 2020, prior to the pandemic, when labor force participation was at 89,700. As a result, there are still more open job postings than there are workers, and employers continue to struggle to fill positions.

By the end of 2022, most policy actions and government support programs have expired or have reduced funding available. Some programs remain active, such as the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant and the Local Restaurant Infrastructure Investment Program. However, funds for both remain unspent, which requires further analysis as to whether these funds are needed and how best to distribute them.

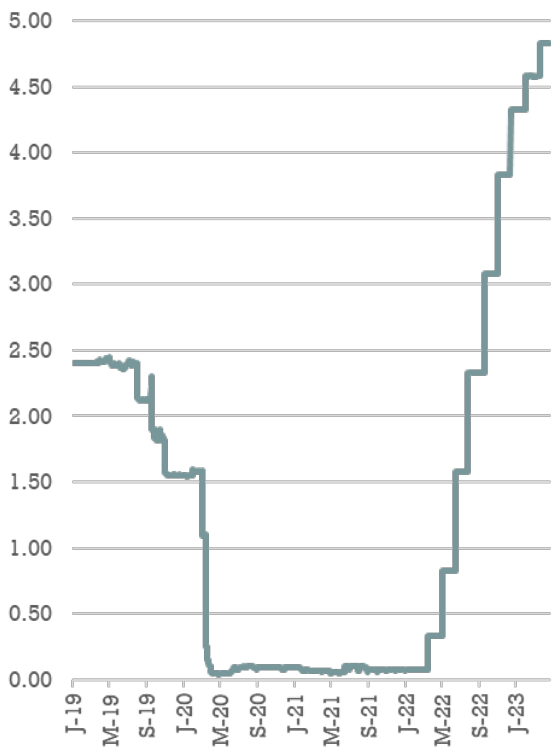
### SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue outreach to businesses and municipalities, while also participating in efforts to learn about their current needs and provide them with targeted support. Furthermore, SRPC will continue to convene the regional economic development stakeholders' group and advocate for economic recovery efforts and practices that support a cohesive regional economy. Partnerships with public and private organizations will also be maintained and enhanced, as these have allowed us to increase technical assistance to the businesses in our communities.

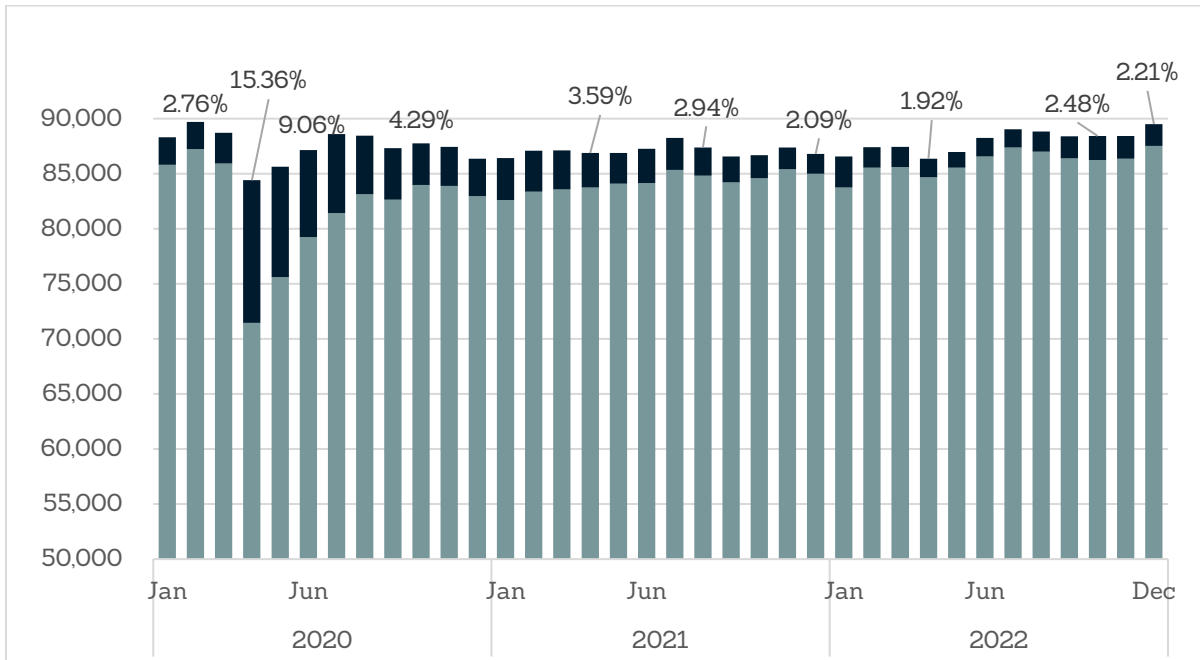
**Figure 1: Average Year-Over-Year Northeast Urban Consumer Price Index**



**Figure 2: Federal Funds Effective Rate**



**Figure 3: SRPC Monthly Employment Since January 2020**





## BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Challenges faced by businesses have shifted over the past year. Employers have expressed that the Covid-19 pandemic is no longer the primary concern - instead it is one of the factors that has contributed to the new challenges around recruiting and retaining a reliable workforce.

### GOALS



Support entrepreneurship and business resiliency through technical assistance, information sharing, networking and collaboration, and ongoing adaptation strategies that meet the current and evolving needs of the businesses in the region.

### CURRENT TRENDS

In contrast to prior years, new challenges for businesses are less pandemic-related and are more directly associated with workforce attraction and retention, access to childcare, infrastructure availability, inflation, and the cost and availability of labor and supplies. Another challenge is the low industrial vacancy rate, which is making it difficult for manufacturing, warehouse and distribution, and research and development companies to grow, therefore limiting business start-up, relocation and expansion. Likely in response to the growing demand and the desire for new opportunities, municipalities are turning to new ways in which they can expand commercial space. For instance, the Rochester City Council recently voted to rezone 15 properties adjacent to their existing downtown development from residential to commercial.<sup>ii</sup>

Office vacancy rates, however, are higher and can be expected to increase with the ongoing popularity of remote work. One of the major business centers in the region, for example, is expected to see a higher office vacancy rate with the closure of Liberty Mutual's two Dover facilities, which accommodated 4,500 employees. These closures are a direct result of consolidating locations due to remote work.<sup>iii</sup>

Despite the obstacles, there are signs that point to a "booming" business environment in our region, and the demand for goods and services remains high. In Dover, for example, 10 new eateries, coffee shops, and retail stores have recently opened, and commercial spaces are turning over quickly.<sup>iv</sup> Other indicators that point to a strong regional and state business outlook include record-low bankruptcies.<sup>v</sup> Strafford County remained at a record-low level during 2022, with a total of 37 filings,<sup>vi</sup> compared to 162 in 2019.<sup>vii</sup> Furthermore, as of July 2022, much of the \$3 million in pandemic aid for restaurants (available through the Local Restaurant Infrastructure Investment Program) remained unspent. Further analysis is required in order to determine if the funding is still readily available due to an absence of need, or whether the lack of applications is directly related to the limited capacity of restaurateurs and shortage of staff.<sup>viii</sup>

### SRPC ACTIONS

While resources for the Consultant Technical Assistance Program have ended, SRPC will continue to provide direct technical assistance to small businesses and connect them to partner organizations around the state to support their operations. Furthermore, information on resources and funding opportunities will continue to be provided to over 6,000 regional businesses across SRPC's 18 municipalities on a quarterly basis. Other projects, such as the Municipal Record Digitization Project, allowed SRPC to build capacity and purchase equipment. Resources from that project are still available to our member communities.

**Figure 4: New Mixed-Use Development on North Main Street in Rochester**



*Source: SRPC, 2022*

**Figure 5: Liberty Mutual is closing its Dover headquarters due to reduced in-office workforce. The campus on 6th Street has space for nearly 3,000 employees.**



*Source: Fosters Daily Democratic*

# HOUSING

Recent developments in the economy and market conditions have led to higher housing costs and rising interest rates. In addition, the housing market continues to face challenges that stem from low supply and high demand for people looking to buy and rent.

## GOALS



Use data, partnerships, and information-sharing to help portray the current conditions and the impacts that housing has on the regional economy, in addition to exploring ways in which housing-related barriers limit business growth and expansion.

## CURRENT TRENDS

Over the past year, nationwide economic factors have had an impact on our region's housing market, though to a lesser extent than in other parts of the country. Rising interest rates, for example, have somewhat slowed the region's real estate market, but it remains active due to low supply. While average 30-year rates declined after 2018, they are on the rise along with housing costs (see Figure 6). Furthermore, this has not stopped home prices from continuing to rise and has also meant that more affluent buyers have dominated the market. A recent report showed that nearly one-third of all sales in Dover were cash transactions.<sup>ix</sup> In addition to the rising cost of housing caused by supply and demand, recent developments (such as higher mortgage costs associated with interest rate hikes, skyrocketing utility costs, and the increased cost of labor and materials in the construction industry) have caused homeownership to become out of reach for many. This has forced potential buyers to remain in the rental market, leading to low vacancy rates and historically high rents. As shown in Figure 7, vacancy rates in Strafford County in 2022 hovered around 1%, which is higher than the state but lower than other areas like Carroll County. Paired with a nearly \$500 increase in 2-bedroom apartments since 2020, the housing crisis continues to be a top issue in this region,

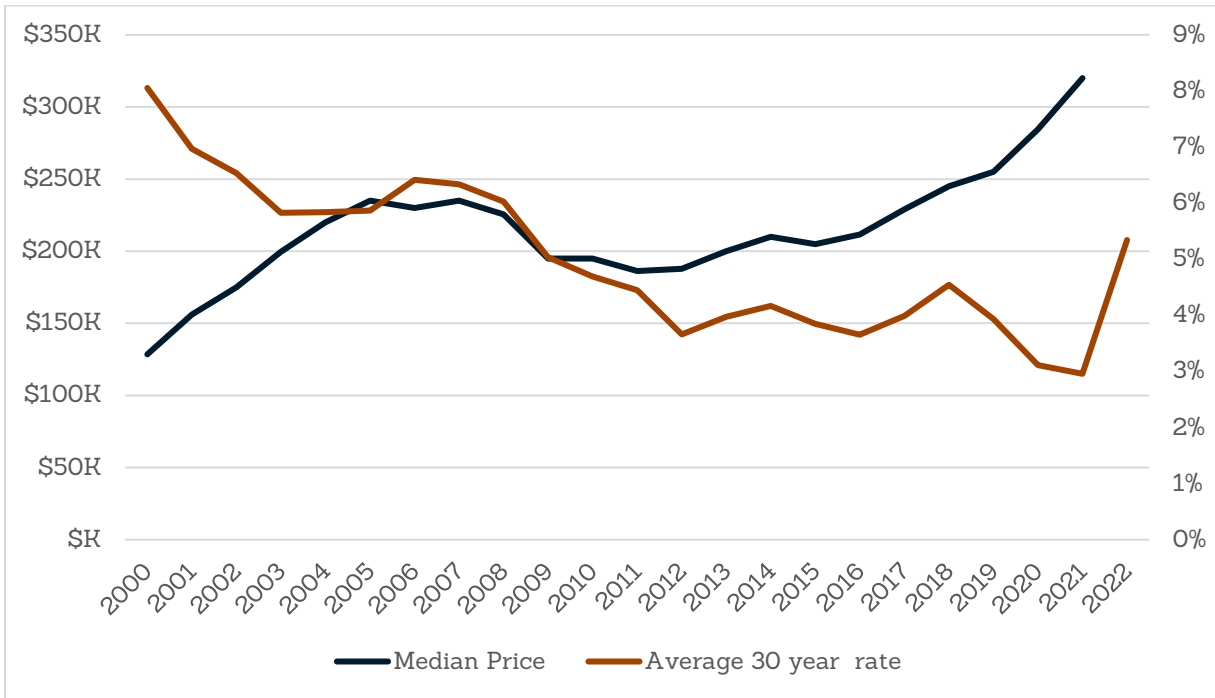
In a time when the conditions for buyers and renters remain dire, many federal emergency relief programs offered during the pandemic have come to an end, including the NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which despite receiving extended funding for existing recipients, stopped accepting new applications in October 2022.<sup>x</sup> The combination of all these market conditions not only impacts affordability but could also result in an increase in people experiencing homelessness across the state.

In response, housing has been a top priority for many stakeholders and lawmakers, which has led to efforts to help increase housing production in New Hampshire. For example, in 2022 InvestNH, a \$100 million housing program was established to incentivize the creation of multi-unit workforce housing around the state. Funds are being used by local governments to audit and update their zoning regulations to reduce existing barriers to housing. Nearly half of the money will be used to create over 900 affordable units across the state, 57 of which are to be built in our region.

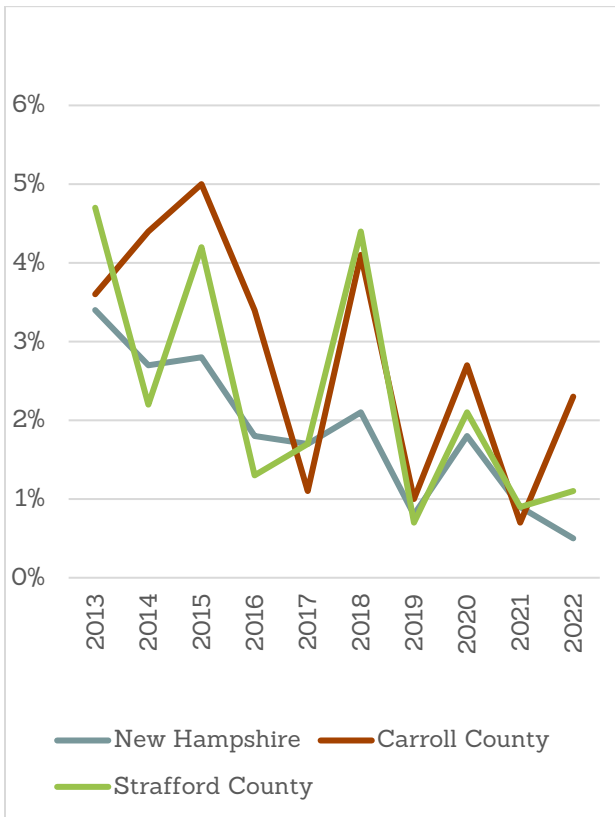
## SRPC ACTIONS

The findings of SRPC's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, completed in March 2023, will be used to facilitate regional discussions with local officials, businesses, economic development stakeholders, legislators, and others, to help with informed decision making and support the creation of affordable housing in the region through the use of innovative tools and policies.

**Figure 6: Purchase Price and Interest Trends**



**Figure 7: Vacancy Rates in Strafford County, Carroll County and the State**



# INFRASTRUCTURE

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has been dispersing funding since early 2022. Projects are underway to improve infrastructure, but ongoing challenges such as inflation, rising energy and construction costs, and the continuation of supply chain disruptions are impacting the investments being made.

## GOALS



Improve the resilience of the region's infrastructure. Help partner organizations and municipalities to plan for their infrastructure needs and access funding for implementation.

## CURRENT TRENDS

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) made historic federal investments in infrastructure. Over the next five years, New Hampshire is expected to receive \$1.6 billion for transportation, including roads and bridges, public transit, and electric vehicle charging, and at least \$100 million for broadband internet (see Figure 8).<sup>xi</sup> The State has already received \$92 million for clean water, \$28.6 million for clean energy, \$13.3 million for airports, \$1.8 million for ports, and \$17.6 million for resiliency to be used through Fiscal Year 2023.<sup>xii</sup> These investments were sorely needed, but unfortunately it is competing with historic economic circumstances and high inflation. New Hampshire received an approximately 25% increase in highway improvement funds which was counteracted by an approximately 30% increase in the cost of planning and construction.<sup>xiii</sup> While it has decreased somewhat since the 2022 CEDS update, the cost of gasoline, a major factor in the cost of construction projects, is still \$1.14 per gallon higher than in early 2019 (Figure 9).

As part of SRPC's role as an MPO, all of the transportation funding spent in the region is tracked in our Metro Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.<sup>xiv</sup> Some key projects that are expected to have major economic benefits are Project 29604, Complete Streets upgrades to NH108 in Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth; and Project 40599, an economic study to add Exit 10 to the Spaulding Turnpike.

In addition to the transportation funding, the BIL invests heavily in high-speed internet. As of 2023, the SRPC region has broadband access for approximately 99% of homes. Digital Equity funding will be an important resource for this region going forward. The NH BEA is administering these funds and currently has two RFPs listed for the development of two broadband plans.

Through the BIL, New Hampshire is also expected to receive \$92 million dollars for water infrastructure including updates and improvements to ensure safe and clean water for residents<sup>xv</sup>, improve flood prevention, upgrade the waterways systems and protect public health.<sup>xvi</sup> In addition to that, the state has awarded \$17.8 million to NH communities coming from the ARPA funds to help with wastewater and drinking water infrastructure projects, including Dover and Rochester.<sup>xvii</sup>

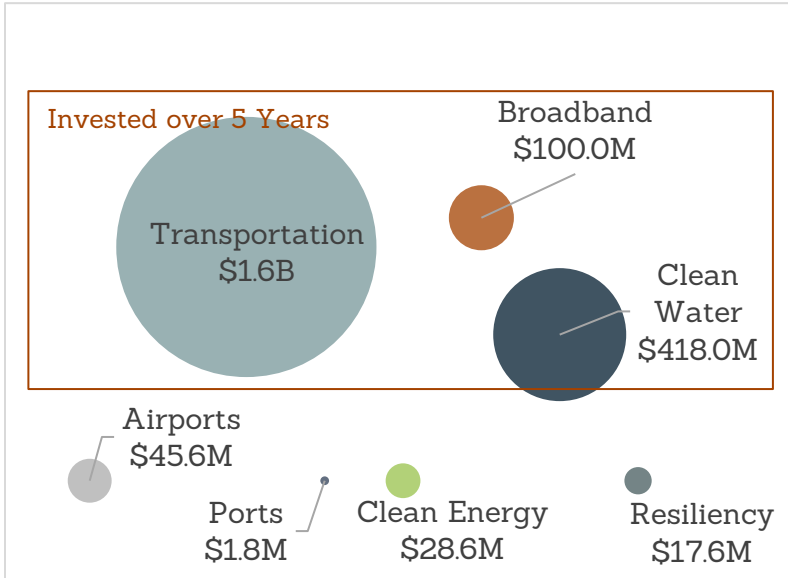
## SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to influence the region's infrastructure through our planning and advocacy for projects and our ability to connect partner organizations to funding resources. Since the adoption of the 2021-2025 Priority Project List, SRPC economic development staff have continued to support state or federal funding programs by writing letters of support and sharing knowledge and information.



Furthermore, we will continue supporting projects that enhance the infrastructure resiliency of the region and expand the region's competitiveness.

**Figure 8: Infrastructure Bill Investments in New Hampshire**



**Figure 9: US Gasoline Prices: 2019-2023**



# MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Covid-19 pandemic shed light on disparities in mobility and accessibility for people in the workforce, particularly for people with low incomes, disabilities, or other factors that impact access to essential services. The high cost of fuel and ongoing labor shortages have had lasting impacts on transportation. As a result, travel patterns have yet to return to pre-pandemic conditions, and the nature of transportation may be forever changed.

## GOALS



Expand availability of alternative modes of transportation by enhancing and promoting development of active transportation networks and public transit. Improve roadway safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people in non-motorized vehicles.

## CURRENT TRENDS

Commuting in New Hampshire has been significantly impacted by Covid. Remote work, meetings and conferences are here to stay, and as a result, fewer people come to the state and the region for work. This may be causing slight shifts in peak hour traffic, but it is still too soon to assess long-term impacts. However, for those who cannot work remotely, the high cost of housing presents challenges as many workers in the region cannot find or afford housing near their jobs and must commute long distances.<sup>xviii</sup> This puts a financial burden on people's ability to save money and affects the quality of their lives.

Ridership on the region's two public transit providers, COAST and UNH Wildcat Bus, is still recovering from the pandemic (see Figures 10 and 11). This continues to disproportionately affect people with low incomes, disabilities, and other challenges who rely on public transit to get around.

The interregional transportation network provided by C&J buses and Amtrak is also slowly recovering. C&J Bus is now offering 5 trips from Dover to South Station compared to the 14 daily round trips from Dover in 2019. C&J service from Portsmouth is back to 20 daily round trips, and hopefully more trips will resume in Dover soon.<sup>xix</sup> Meanwhile, Amtrak's Downeaster is back up to 90% (Figure 12) of the pre-Covid ridership and the Durham station has just reached its one million passenger mark. Improvements to the Downeaster are in the works through the BIL and the NH Ten Year Plan.<sup>xx</sup>

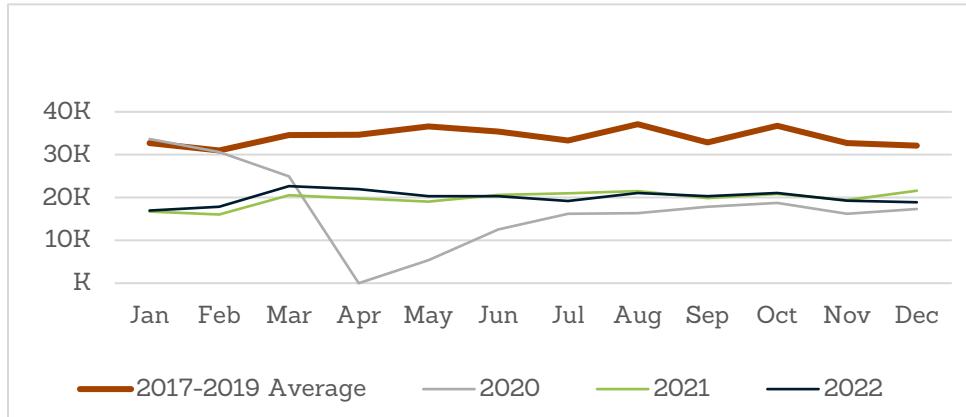
## SRPC ACTIONS

SRPC will continue to study and advocate for proactive planning between transportation and the built environment. By increasing the role of downtowns as economic hubs, we can make our communities more walkable, bikeable, and ADA accessible. Current outdoor dining initiatives already promote walkable vibrant communities, which could be improved by further development of pedestrian infrastructure in town centers, downtowns, and commercial areas.

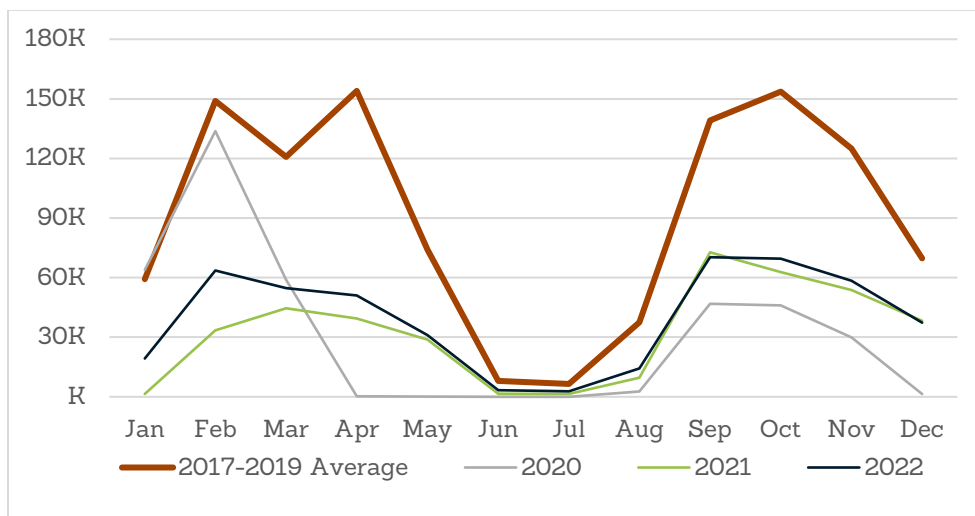
In addition, SRPC works to decrease transportation dependency by advocating for the economic benefits of public transit and promoting housing development that enables workers to live near their jobs and other services. SRPC will continue to promote new mixed-use, high-density development along major corridors with existing public transit to increase transportation efficiency.

SRPC is currently developing an Active Transportation Plan for the region. The plan, which is set to be adopted in July 2023, will guide the development of non-motorized transportation facilities, and maximize the use of future investments for a safer, cleaner, and better-connected region.

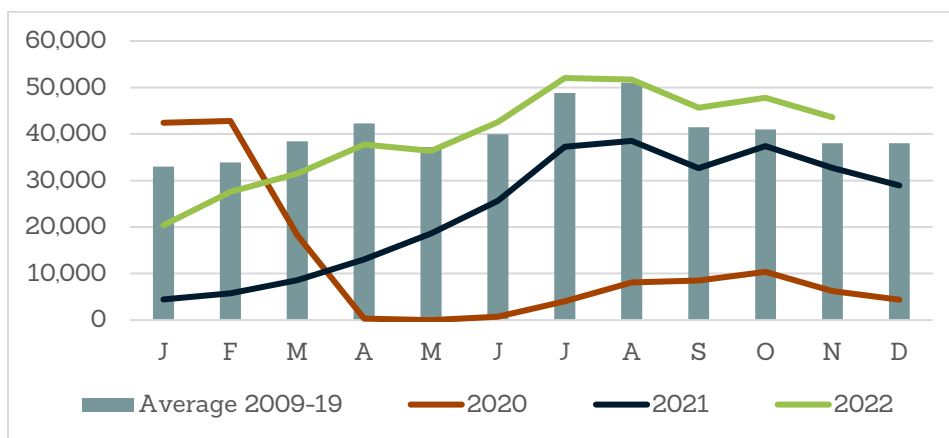
**Figure 10: COAST Fixed Route: Monthly Averages for Years 2017-2019 vs. 2020-2022**



**Figure 11: UNH Wildcat Transit Ridership: Monthly Averages for Years 2017-2019 vs. 2020-2022**



**Figure 12: Historical Downeaster Monthly Ridership: 2009-2013, 2020, 2021, 2022**



## AGE FRIENDLINESS

Age friendliness refers to a community being welcoming, supportive, and inclusive, with economic opportunities, for citizens at all stages of their lives. Access to housing, transportation and social interactions are important components of community age-friendliness.

### GOAL



Encourage municipalities and businesses to create communities that are economically inviting, healthy, and accessible for residents of all ages.

### CURRENT TRENDS

Older adults over the age of 65 are the fastest-growing age group in the concentrations throughout the region (see Map 2). 77 percent of older adults wish to remain in their homes as they age.<sup>xxi</sup> Alternates like Riverwoods offer close connections to businesses, dining, and recreation in Durham, however at a price that is not accessible to all. Those looking to age in place in rural areas like Strafford or Wakefield face limited access to transit and services. Compared to the rest of New Hampshire, the Economic Development District also contains a greater share of young adults aged 18 to 29 due to the presence of the University of New Hampshire. Much like older adults, young adults face extraordinary housing and transportation challenges, even in the urban cores. Solutions like those found in the *New Hampshire Housing Toolbox* seek to ensure that housing is available for residents at all stages of life. These are largely policy-based solutions that municipalities can adjust and adapt to their community's density, character, and demographics.

Access to reliable transportation is also essential throughout our lives. An increase in the need for COAST's demand-response (also known as "paratransit") services over the last decade has been driven by increases in the 65+ population, a noticeable trend in rural and semi-rural areas nationwide (see Figure 13). These services are important for aging residents to maintain independence and access social events and medical care. On-demand ridership is returning to pre-pandemic levels, but there are significant gaps with regular public transit, which serves only 4 of the district's 15 communities. The resources of COAST and other non-profits are not always able to fulfill the region's paratransit needs. For this reason, connections to the existing transit, including COAST, and Amtrak in Dover and Durham, are essential.

While housing and transportation are key factors influencing quality of life, a person's ability to engage within their community and have spaces to recreate are also important. Many older adults are involved in community boards and leadership teams but may not find equitable access to recreational facilities and activities. The reverse may be true for young adults, where there is a lack of time or resources to be involved in advocacy or community groups, but they experience fewer barriers to recreation and events from week to week.

### SRPC ACTIONS

- Complete Age-Friendly Action Plans for Newmarket, Farmington, Strafford, and Rochester as part of the Communities for Healthy Aging Transitions (CHAT) project
- Carry out two pilot projects related to age-friendliness as part of the CHAT Project

- Integrate age-friendly planning and considerations into upcoming efforts like the Rochester Recreation Plan and Active Transportation Plan
- Seek future funding to expand consideration of age-friendly planning efforts for all age groups.

**Map 2: Percentages of People in the Region over 65 Years of Age**

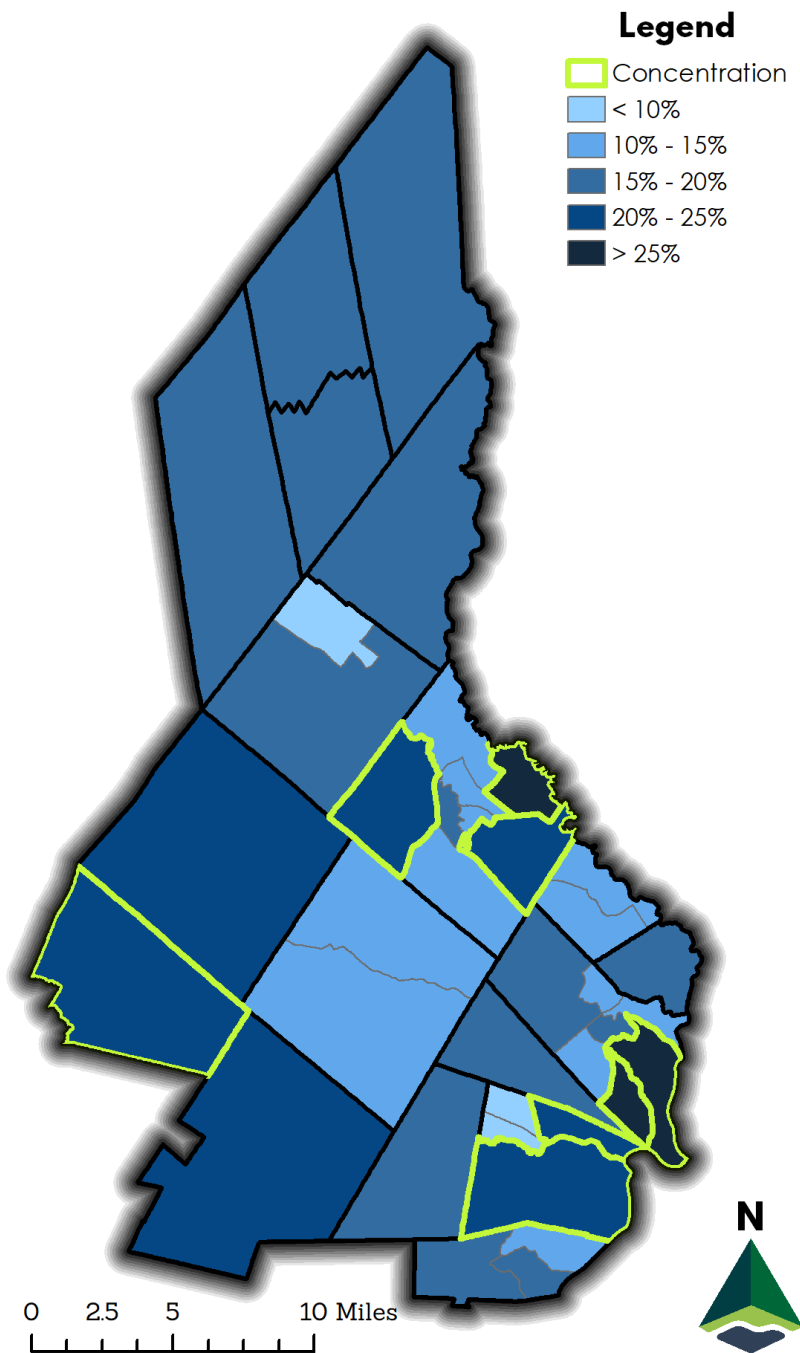
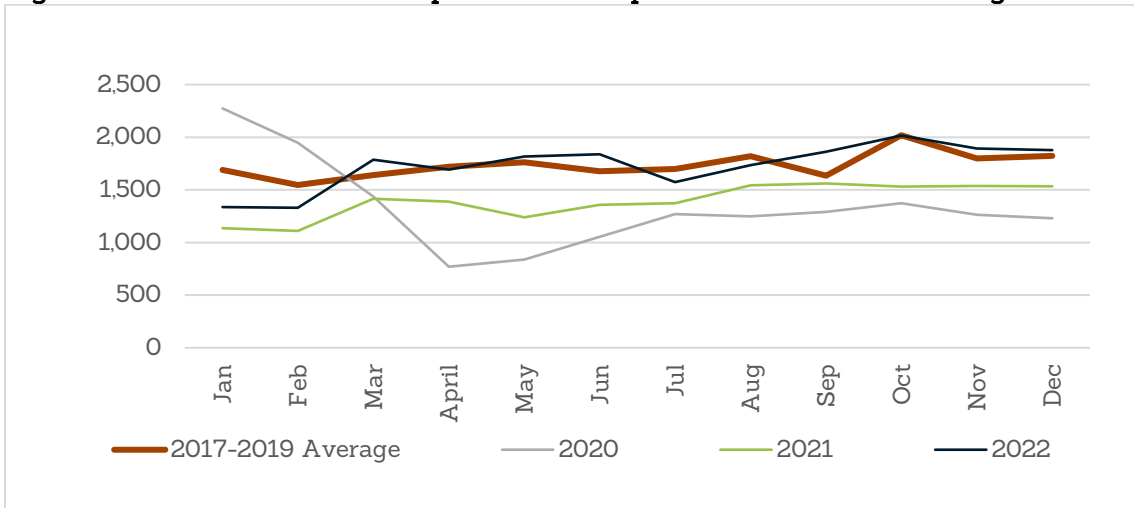




Figure 13: COAST Demand Response Ridership 2017-2019 Month Average vs. 2020-2022



## WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION

Even though the labor force in Strafford County is virtually back to pre-pandemic levels, the main barriers for hiring and retaining workers remain unchanged: a lack of available and affordable housing, a shortage of affordable childcare, and access to a job with a living wage.

### GOAL



Serve as a convener for stakeholders in the workforce and education sectors (including but not limited to educational institutions, businesses, and economic development partners), while supporting efforts that promote workforce development, attraction, recruitment, and training.

### CURRENT TRENDS

Over the past year, issues around workforce recruitment and retention continued to be one of the main challenges for the region's economy. The labor force and unemployment rate are both lower than before Covid-19, and high turnover rates have made replacing and training workers more costly and time intensive for employers. These staffing challenges are pushing employers to use innovative approaches such as referral, hiring, and incentive bonuses to attract or retain employees. In Barrington, for example, Select Board members approved \$70,000 in bonuses for 14 police department employees in 2022, and \$250,000 in bonuses for another 48 municipal staff members, funded by federal stimulus money.<sup>xxii</sup>

Interestingly, according to the Workforce by Age in Strafford County analysis shown in Figure 14, there is an increase in people over 65 remaining in the workforce over the past 3 years. However, even with the high numbers of job postings in 2022, minimum wage and workers' wages in general in the County are not keeping up with the living wage. Table 2 from MIT's Wage Calculator exposes the large gaps between the minimum wage, poverty wage and a living wage for various household sizes in Strafford County.

Economic development stakeholders in the region have emphasized the need to expand workforce attraction and retention efforts. In response to this, a portion of the \$50,000 CEDRs (Collaborative Economic Development Regions) grant received from Department of Business and Economic Affairs is being allocated towards a workforce development program that will support businesses in the Seacoast region.

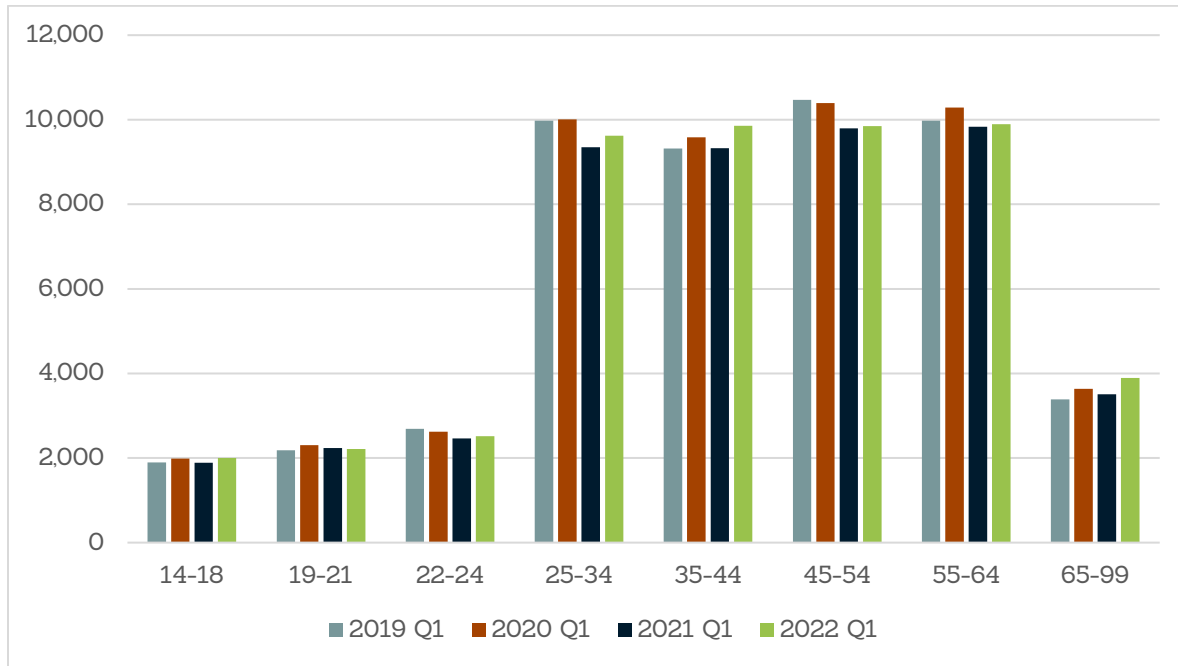
In the realm of education, there continues to be a lack of skilled trainees needed to fill the growing number of available positions, especially in the trades-related sector. In response, organizations at the state and local level continue to collaborate with educational institutions to implement and promote programs that help support workforce training and development, such as the Career Pathway Awareness Program (led by the Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce), ApprenticeshipNH,<sup>xxiii</sup> the NH DOE Work-Based Learning Internship Fund,<sup>xxiv</sup> WorkInvestNH,<sup>xxv</sup> and UNH's Corporate Engagement Programs.<sup>xxvi</sup>

### SRPC ACTION

SRPC will continue to act as a convener of stakeholders through its CEDRs/Seacoast Economy Calls to provide a positive connection between actors in the areas of workforce and education, understand the current challenges facing employers and employees, and collaborate on actionable solutions. Funds provided by the NH BEA that support the CEDRs will be used to assist small businesses in the region

with workforce recruitment and development through expert talks, podcasts, videos, and print materials demonstrating successful attraction and retention techniques, innovative ideas, and general advice.

**Figure 14: Workforce by Age in Strafford County**



**Table 2: Living Wages by Household Type for Strafford County**

Household Type		Poverty Wage	Poverty Salary	Poverty Salary per month	Living Wage	Living Salary	Living Salary per month
1 Adult	0 Children	\$6.53	\$13,582	\$1,132	\$17.45	\$36,296	\$3,025
	1 Child	\$8.80	\$18,304	\$1,525	\$35.87	\$74,610	\$6,217
	2 Children	\$11.07	\$23,026	\$1,919	\$46.14	\$95,971	\$7,998
	3 Children	\$13.34	\$27,747	\$2,312	\$61.30	\$127,504	\$10,625
2 Adults (1 Working)	0 Children	\$8.80	\$18,304	\$1,525	\$27.43	\$57,054	\$4,755
	1 Child	\$11.07	\$23,026	\$1,919	\$33.95	\$70,616	\$5,885
	2 Children	\$13.34	\$27,747	\$2,312	\$38.62	\$80,330	\$6,694
	3 Children	\$15.61	\$32,469	\$2,706	\$43.86	\$91,229	\$7,602
2 Adults (both working)	0 Children	\$4.40	\$9,152	\$763	\$13.71	\$28,517	\$2,376
	1 Child	\$5.54	\$11,523	\$960	\$19.88	\$41,350	\$3,446
	2 Children	\$6.67	\$13,874	\$1,156	\$25.12	\$52,250	\$4,354
	3 Children	\$7.81	\$16,245	\$1,354	\$30.65	\$63,752	\$5,313

# COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

The greater Seacoast is an attractive and enjoyable place to live and visit with a rich variety of both rural and urban features. Cultural amenities, historical downtowns, green spaces, and natural resources have created an environment that generations of families have made homes in and scores of tourists are drawn to every year. Assets, both natural and manmade, are major attractions and continue to enhance the quality of life in the region.

## GOAL



Continue supporting efforts that enhance community vibrancy through initiatives that increase community diversity, encourage local businesses, support local arts, and bring foot traffic to the region's downtowns. Advocate for actions that would expand the resiliency of downtowns and areas of cultural and historical significance and promote outdoor recreation and green spaces.

## CURRENT TRENDS

Through 2022 and 2023, the region's foot traffic, live performing arts, and overall draw of visitors continued to improve – many venues and cultural facilities came back to life. Audiences returned to live events and performances with reduced or altogether expired masking and social distancing requirements. However, theatres continue to struggle to increase revenue and many small businesses have been more adversely impacted by labor shortages than “chain” institutions. The use of outdoor space continues to be popular, and municipalities are improving and beautifying their public spaces to accommodate this increased interest. Dover is developing the Cocheco Waterfront, a 3.4-acre mixed-use development including a park and other “third spaces” as well as 30,000 square feet of commercial space and over 400 residential units (Figure 15).<sup>xxvii</sup>

Tourism has stabilized. One indicator of this has been meals and tax receipts as reported to the New Hampshire Department of Revenue (see Figure 16). Quarter 3 of every year has historically been the highest grossing, particularly for Lakes Region communities in the northern half of the Strafford district. Throughout the whole district, receipts have surpassed their pre-pandemic figures across all four quarters. In the fall “leaf peeping” season, approximately 4.3 million visitors came to the state in Fall 2022, spending over \$2 billion.<sup>xxviii</sup>

## SRPC ACTIONS

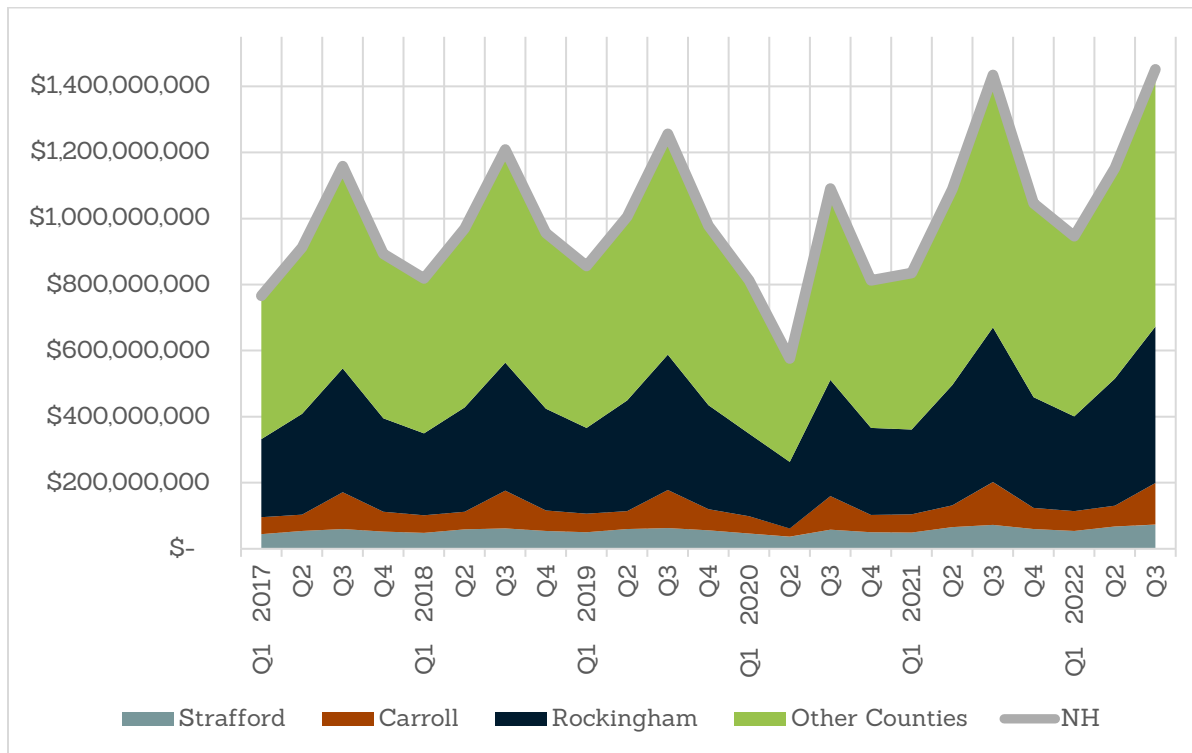
SRPC will continue to advocate for healthy outdoor lifestyles by maintaining and updating the Promoting Outdoor Play! (POP!) recreation inventory for the most efficient user experience. As part of seasonal data collection, SRPC will continue to partner with the region's economic development officials and other stakeholders to complete pedestrian counts in the urban cores, particularly for special events such Free Comic Book Day in Rochester and the Spring Fling weekend in Dover.

**Figure 15: Rendering of the Cocheco River Waterfront Development, in the planning phase**



*Source: City of Dover, 2022*

**Figure 16: Total Meals and Rooms Receipts by Quarter: 2017-2022**





# CHILDCARE

Adequate childcare services are an essential part of a healthy economy and community. A significant share of the workforce is comprised of parents with young children. Insufficient, expensive, or unpredictable childcare creates additional barriers for working parents, which may force them to make difficult decisions for their families or careers.

## GOAL



Promote collaboration and support to this industry to help create a stronger network and provide data and partnership where needed.

## CURRENT TRENDS

The childcare system includes centers serving children before they reach K-12 schooling as well as before- and after-school and summer programs for older children requiring supervision. Without these programs, many of the parents of the enrolled children would be unable to work. However, insufficient staffing availability, high costs, and unpredictable coverage have continued to burden families and childcare providers alike.

There continues to be too few childcare spots for children under 5 years old. If all the childcare centers were operating at full building capacity, it still would not be enough. In addition to building size, childcare center capacity is also defined by the number of available teachers, and as of July 2022 childcare employment is down 8.4% since the start of Covid.<sup>xxix</sup> Childcare centers operate in compliance with low state-mandated staff-to-child ratios to ensure that staff can provide adequate care to each child.<sup>xxx</sup> These ratios and continued worker shortages (partially due to stagnant increases in wages for teachers – see Table 3) result in centers operating at lower capacity than what the building or classrooms might be able to contain. This is exasperated by recent regulatory changes in hiring practices. As of December 2022, childcare centers are required to delay hiring staff until rigorous background checks are completed, resulting in childcare positions being empty for six weeks or more.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Covid-19 continues to spread, with approximately 200 cases statewide each week. This is in part due to a low rate (15.7%) of Covid vaccinations for children under 5 years of age. If a child gets Covid, they must remain home for the week. This impacts the household if a parent has to miss work to take care of a sick child, and their employer who has to “fill the gap” that missing employee creates by being out.

## SRPC ACTIONS

Over the past year, SRPC has learned more about available childcare industry data and mapped childcare deserts in the region. Both have been included in the updated 2023 Regional Data Snapshot, making this information easily accessible to communities. Childcare experts from Early Learning New Hampshire presented at a SEDS call on March 1, 2022<sup>xxxii</sup> providing stakeholders insight into the industry, the challenges inherent to it and the strong connection between childcare and the economy. Staff from Senator Shaheen’s office also met with the SEDS on May 2, 2023 to discuss the challenges of childcare in the region. The actions highlighted include policy changes regarding teacher-student ratios and shared use facilities, and local zoning updates to allow for more widespread childcare facility uses. SRPC will

leverage these new relationships and discussions to expand knowledge, help our municipalities to make connections, affect policy changes, update zoning and access funding and resources.

**Table 3: Childcare and Preschool Employment and Wages vs Living Wages in Strafford County**

	Employees	Median Salary		Living Wage (2021)	
	2021	2020	2021	1 Adult, No Kids	2 Adults, No Kids
Childcare Workers	170 (+10)	\$25,363	\$23,178	\$36,171	\$26,728
Preschool Teachers	270 (+10)	\$33,783	\$29,782		

## RESILIENCY

In 2020, SPRC received a CARES Act grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated to support economic recovery and resiliency planning and to provide technical assistance to communities, businesses and other organizations impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and within SRPC's service area. As a result of this funding opportunity, SPRC was able to hire an Economic Recovery Coordinator to jumpstart and carry out recovery projects and initiatives. While our economy continues to recover, SRPC's efforts are becoming more focused on building resilience to withstand future shocks to our economy and helping communities and businesses to do the same. This primarily included strengthening and creating new relationships with stakeholders, continuing to adapt to a virtual economy, continuing to provide technical assistance to small businesses (English and Non-English speaking) and tracking and disseminating funding opportunities.

Partnerships that have been created or strengthened through this work are maintained through continued outreach and engagement efforts. These efforts include continuing the business outreach emails on a quarterly basis, providing support to the business community, and continuing the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders/CEDRs calls on a bi-weekly schedule. Partnerships created or strengthened include:

- Small Business Development Center
- Center for Women and Enterprise
- Small Business Development Center
- Internal Revenue Service Stakeholder Liaison Services
- NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs
- NH Office of Planning and Development
- Hampton Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
- The Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
- Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Falls Chamber of Commerce
- Indonesian Community Connect
- Office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen
- Strafford Economic Development Corporation
- Wentworth Economic Development Corporation
- Regional Economic Development Center
- NH State Council on the Arts
- Great Bay Community College
- Department of Education
- NH Employment Security
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast
- Seacoast Public Health Network

Our efforts to support a resilient economy in the Strafford Economic Development District include:

- **Municipal Record Digitization:** This program helped improve organizational resilience while increasing efficiency for municipal staff if and when required to work remotely. It also aimed to increase citizen access to documents online. While funding has ended, SRPC still offers the equipment to municipalities to continue digitizing their documents. As a result of this program, a total of 14 SRPC staff members helped digitize an average of 10,000 documents over a 9-month period in 13 communities in the SRPC region.

<https://strafford.org/services/municipal-record-digitization/>

- **Consultant Technical Assistance Program for Small Businesses:** Including web development, marketing and advertising, graphic design, IT services, and cybersecurity. As a result of this program, 76 business in 14 of SRPC’s 18 communities received support across the 6 different categories, representing a total of 277.3 hours of assistance provided, totaling a value of \$32,000 in services offered at no cost to local businesses.  
<https://strafford.org/services/technical-assistance-for-small-businesses/>
- **Resources for Non-English Speaking Business Owners:** SRPC provided, and continues to provide, in-house assistance to Spanish-speaking business owners.  
<https://strafford.org/services/resources-for-non-english-speaking-business-owners/>
- **Business Outreach and Funding Opportunities:** Funding resources were disseminated monthly to a list of all registered businesses in the SRPC geographical region via email. Emails included federal, state, and local funding opportunities to help businesses with the economic impacts of Covid-19. Throughout the duration of the grant, a total of 24 emails were disseminated. SRPC staff will continue to disseminate these resources on a quarterly basis.  
<https://strafford.org/services/covid-recovery-funding-opportunities/>
- **Direct Technical Assistance to Businesses:** Throughout the duration of the grant, a total of 86 businesses across the SRPC geographical region received one-on-one business support. Topics of assistance included help with different funding programs, business expansion and adaptation, workforce attraction and retention, translation services, ERZ tax credit program (Economic Revitalization Zones), among others.

**Table 4: Strafford EDD Priority Project List**

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
Barrington	BAR1	Barrington’s first sidewalks	\$1,253,514	No Updates
COAST	COAST1	COAST Administrative, Operations, and Maintenance (A/O/M) Facility	\$17,200,000	Updated
Dover	DOV1	Redevelopment of environmentally stressed plating plant and grounds on Broadway in downtown Dover	\$2,500,000	Updated
Dover	DOV2	Public Infrastructure Investment to Assist with Private Development	\$1,000,000	Updated
Dover	DOV3	Public Infrastructure Investment to Assist with Pedestrian and Vehicular flow	\$17,000,000	Updated
Dover	DOV4	Community Trail connection and expansion to Knox Marsh Rd	\$800,000	Updated
Dover	DOV5	Central Avenue Reconstruction	\$3,000,000	Updated
Dover	DOV6	Whittier Street Sidewalk	\$650,000	Completed
Dover	DOV7	Downtown Waterfront Shoreline Stabilization/Riverwalk	\$700,000	Updated
Dover	DOV8	Chestnut Street Bridge Repair	\$800,000	Completed
Dover	DOV9	Henry Law Avenue and River Street Reconstruction	\$900,000	Updated

<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Estimated total cost</b>	<b>Status</b>
Dover	DOV10	Fifth/Grove Street Reconstruction	\$1,100,000	Updated
Dover	DOV11	Public Safety Fire/Police Training Structure	\$600,000	Updated
Dover	DOV12	Liberty Mutual Site Redevelopment	\$0	New!
Durham	DUR1	Madbury Rd Improvements	\$2,885,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR2	Fire Station Renovation and Overflow	\$520,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR3	Critical Facilities Backup Generators	\$580,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR4	66 Main Street Structured Parking	\$7,000,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR5	Mixing System at Beech Hill Tank	\$275,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR6	Southern Strafford County Communications System	\$2,500,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR7	Wastewater Treatment Plant Odor Control System	\$750,000	No Updates
Durham	DUR8	Bickford-Chesley House Preservation	\$437,475	No Updates
Durham	DUR9	Durham Old Town Hall Preservation	\$366,270	No Updates
Durham	DUR10	Oyster River Dam	\$1,462,950	No Updates
Farmington	FAR1	Sidewalk Network Expansion	\$990,160	Updated
Farmington	FAR2	Re-Development of the Old Fire Department Lot		Updated
Farmington	FAR3	Replacement of Red-Listed Bridges		Updated
Farmington	FAR4	Farmington Levee		Updated
Farmington	FAR5	Update to TIF Development and Finance Plan		New!
Milton	MIL1	Pedestrian & Utilities Upgrades	\$2,600,000	No Updates
New Durham	NDU1	Boodey Farmstead- Cultural and Historical	\$300,000	Updated
New Durham	NDU2	Meetinghouse Restoration- Cultural and Historical Project	\$280,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC1	Portland St Sidewalk extension	\$1,395,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC2	Route 11 Safety and Capacity Improvements	\$5,800,000	Updated

Sponsor	Project ID	Project Title	Estimated total cost	Status
Rochester	ROC3	Union Street Parking lot	\$1,350,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC5	Round Pond Reservoir Capacity	\$6,000,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC6	Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrades	\$31,900,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC8	Portland Street Bridge Rehabilitation	\$750,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC9	Lead Service Line Replacements	\$200,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC10	North Main Street/Chestnut Hill Road Connector		Updated
Hope on Haven Hill	ROC11	The Center for Hope and Wellness Center at Hope on Haven Hill	\$3,200,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC12	Innovation Drive Extension	\$2,500,000	No Updates
Rochester	ROC13	Innovation Drive Sewer Pump Station	\$2,750,000	Updated
Rochester	ROC15	Rochester Riverwalk	\$2,000,000	No Updates
NH Small Business Development Center	SBDC1	NH SBDC Inclusivity Project	\$280,000	Updated
Somersworth	SOM1	Library Accessibility Improvements	\$4,500,000	Updated
Somersworth	SOM2	National Guard Readiness Center Reuse		Updated
Somersworth	SOM4	Constitutional Way Complete Streets	\$1,942,530	Updated
Somersworth	SOM5	Main Street Complete Streets	\$7,747,751	Updated
Somersworth	SOM7	Millennium Field Improvements	\$200,000	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM8	Noble Pines (Hamilton Street) Water Tank Replacement Project	\$6,615,000	Updated
Somersworth	SOM9	JA Sons Prince Garage Brownfields Cleanup	\$660,000	Updated
Somersworth	SOM10	Somersworth Public Library Addition	\$4,500,000	New!
Somersworth	SOM11	261 Main Street- Brownfields Clean Up	\$650,000	No Updates
Somersworth	SOM12	Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades-	\$17,640,000	New!
SRPC	SRPC2	Brownfields Assessment Program	\$500,000	Updated
SRPC	SRPC3	Regional Housing Needs Assessment	\$25,000	Updated

<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Estimated total cost</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>SRPC, Somersworth, Rochester</b>	SRPC4	Spaulding Turnpike Exit 10	\$1,914,105	Updated
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH3	West Edge Innovation Neighborhood	\$80,000,000	Updated
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH4	Economic resilience through enhanced capacity to monitor future threats and mobilize resources to combat future disease outbreaks	\$20,000,000	Updated
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH5	Expansion of UNH's Jackson Estuarine Laboratory in support of a resilient NH coastal economy	\$3,813,000	Updated
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH7	Sources and Fate of PFAS in New Hampshire Community Wastewater Systems	\$900,000	Completed
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH8	South Drive Infrastructure Improvements	\$3,800,000	Updated
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH9	Blue Economy Regional Master Plan Development	\$500,000	Updated
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH10	Cybersecurity Assessment Center and Testbed	\$3,000,000	Updated
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH11	Oyster River Resiliency - Microgrid Improvements	\$6,400,000	New!
<b>University of New Hampshire</b>	UNH12	Building Capacity for PFAS Analysis in NH	\$1,778,000	New!
<b>Wakefield</b>	WAR4	Wakefield Multi-Generational Community Center	\$4,900,000	New!
<b>Wentworth Economic Development Corp., Inc. (WEDCO)</b>	WEDCO 1	Intersection Improvement-Cotton Valley Rail Trail & Rte. 16		No Updates
<b>Wentworth Economic Development Corp., Inc. (WEDCO)</b>	WEDCO 2	Explore Moose Mountains	\$110,000	Updated
<b>Wentworth Economic Development Corp., Inc. (WEDCO)</b>	WEDCO 3	Moose Mountains Scenic Byway		No Updates



# CEDS EVALUATION AND ACTION PLAN

## CEDS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The following performance measures will be used to evaluate the success of future CEDS updates within this five-year cycle, as well as implementation of CEDS priorities. These performance measures were established for the 2021-2025 five-year update and are being tracked in each annual update.

**Table 5: Project Planning Performance Measures**

Performance Measures	2023 Performance
Number of local governments explicitly invited to participate in project solicitation.	17 – all 15 Strafford EDD municipalities, plus Strafford County and the Sanbornville Water Precinct
Number of local governments to submit/update priority projects.	9 member municipalities
Total local government projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS.	54
SRPC Projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS.	4
Other partner organizations to submit priority projects for inclusion in the CEDS.	10 invited, 5 submitted
Total projects submitted by other partner organizations for inclusion in the CEDS.	15
Total projects included in the CEDS.	73
Total cost of proposed CEDS projects.	\$296,320,755
Number of organizations with a project included in the CEDS.	14
Number of CEDS priority projects to report receiving outside funding.	5
Total value of outside funds received for implementing CEDS projects.	Exact funding not reported for all projects. Data to be updated upon adoption if available.
Number of CEDS priority projects to be fully implemented.	4
Number of Strategy Committee meetings at which CEDS planning was discussed.	2

**Table 6: Meeting and Implementation Performance Measures**

<b>Performance Measures</b>	<b>2023 Performance</b>
Number of Strategy Committee meetings at which CEDS implementation was discussed.	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred.
Total attendees at Strategy Committee meetings.	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred.
Unique attendees at Strategy Committee meetings.	SRPC staff to tally once adoption has occurred.
Number of Board of Directors meetings at which CEDS planning was discussed.	0
Number of Board of Directors meetings at which CEDS implementation was discussed.	0
Total attendees at Board of Directors meetings.	N/A
Unique attendees at Board of Directors meetings.	N/A
Thirty-day public comment period prior to adoption? (yes/no)	Yes
Economic indicators in the SRPC Regional Data Snapshot were updated to include the latest available data as part of the annual CEDS update? (yes/no)	Yes - The 2023 Regional Data Snapshot was released in April 2023 and includes protocols to update indicators as data sources release new data.
Total SRPC action items identified for implementing CEDS goals.	24 - See the Action Plan
Total number of action items completed within the five-year cycle.	4 - See the Action Plan
Number of action items with significant progress towards completion, or ongoing action items that were addressed within the period covered by this update.	18 - See the Action Plan



## ACTION PLAN

The following is a compiled list of all SRPC action items identified in the CEDS. Where there was significant overlap between actions these may have been combined or re-written to make each action distinct and measurable. Staff then provided a status update for each action, including identifying new actions, and separated them into sections based on their status (i.e., completed, ongoing, etc.).

### COMPLETED

#### **1 Operate a Consultant Technical Assistance Program using CARES Act funding to provide direct assistance to businesses in our region.**

**Status Details:**

SRPC finished a program to provide small businesses with up to nine hours of free technical assistance with pre-selected consultants in the fields of website development, marketing and advertising, graphic design, audio-visual support, cybersecurity, and generic IT services<sup>187</sup>. The program was highly successful but required additional funding to operate beyond the expiration of CARES Act funds and therefore expired in August 2022.

**Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

#### **2 Operate a Municipal Record Digitization Program using CARES Act funding to improve the organizational resilience of our municipalities by increasing availability of digital records.**

**Status Details:**

SRPC purchased both normal and large-format scanners and has established a schedule to provide free staff scanning support to our municipalities in 2022 prior to expiration of CARES Act funds. After grant funds expired, SRPC retained the scanning equipment and made it available to communities to check out on an as-needed basis.

**Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

#### **3 Update SRPC’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment.**

**Status Details:**

All nine regional planning commissions received funding through NH BEA for the purpose of a collaborative update to all RHNA’s statewide. SRPC completed and published its RHNA report in March 2023 and continues to advocate the results of the data findings to regional stakeholders and municipalities.

**Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Workforce & Education

## **4 Promote recreational sites and opportunities through the Promoting Outdoor Play (POP!) project.**

### **Status Details:**

The project successfully developed, released, and promoted a digital database of recreational sites for use by our member communities and the public. The interactive web-tool and GIS data that supports it is still available and we continue working to add new sites and maintain the data as time allows.

### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

## **ONGOING PROJECTS**

## **1 Continue to convene the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders (SEDS) group to encourage and facilitate information and ideas sharing.**

### **Status Details:**

The group continues to meet regularly. Meetings occur on a bi-weekly basis as stabilizing economic and public health conditions have required less frequent or immediate discussions by the group.

### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Mobility and Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Workforce & Education
- ✓ Community Vibrancy
- ✓ Childcare
- ✓ Resiliency

## **2 Maintain open communication with businesses and municipalities regarding economic development issues, best practices, or funding opportunities.**

### **Status Details:**

SRPC continues to use various electronic communications platforms such as our newsletter "Bits and Pieces", quarterly email updates to our Businesses in Good Standing list, and social media.

### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Mobility and Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Workforce & Education
- ✓ Community Vibrancy
- ✓ Childcare
- ✓ Resiliency

### **3 Provide technical assistance to municipalities, businesses, and non-profits in our region to support recovery efforts and lessen the economic impact of the pandemic.**

#### **Status Details:**

SRPC has a long history of providing direct technical assistance to our member municipalities in various capacities.

#### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Mobility and Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Workforce and Education
- ✓ Community Vibrancy
- ✓ Childcare
- ✓ Resiliency

### **4 Cultivate strong relationships with a wide variety of partner organizations to promote regional approaches to economic development and to advocate on behalf of our region.**

#### **Status Details:**

Progress towards identifying new data sources was limited early in the year, but conversations with the SEDS, including a presentation by Early Learning NH and professionals from the Office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen provided valuable qualitative data for this update, and helped to identify valuable data sources and policy issues.

#### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Mobility and Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Workforce & Education
- ✓ Community Vibrancy
- ✓ Childcare
- ✓ Resiliency

### **5 Support and promote business resiliency plans and their benefits to withstand business shocks as a result of economic disruptions.**

#### **Status Details:**

SRPC continues to monitor and distribute relevant resources to build the resilience of our businesses.

#### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

## 6 Continue collecting data on the childcare system and facilitate the conversation on current and future possible policy changes.

### Status Details:

Progress towards identifying new data sources was limited early in the year, but conversations with the SEDS, including a presentation by Early Learning NH and professionals from the Office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen provided valuable qualitative data for this update, and helped to identify valuable data sources and policy issues.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Childcare

## 7 Continue to work with municipalities to ensure that local hazard mitigation plans are updated regularly to improve the resilience of municipal infrastructure and encourage more resilient development patterns and techniques.

### Status Details:

SRPC worked on 4 plans (Milton, Durham, Barrington, Strafford) with additional towns to be added upon finalization of the grant with HSEM.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Resiliency

## 8 Continue to work with SRPC's coastal municipalities to plan for the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on their communities.

### Status Details:

In FY 2023, SPRC staff worked on a variety of projects to address climate change resilience, including:

- *Land Use Guide for NH: Adapting to Climate Change and Coastal Hazards*
- Seacoast Flood Smart Project
- Implemented model regulations from the *Resilient Land Use Guide*
- Carried out actions from the Building Equity Project
- Durham Climate Adaption Master Plan Chapter
- Building Resilience by Building Equity
- Floodsmart: Full ordinance amendment and outreach materials created several communities.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Community Vibrancy
- ✓ Resiliency

## 9 Maintain an up-to-date Priority Project List for the purpose of supporting local infrastructure projects and advocate on behalf of priority projects to potential funders.

### Status Details:

SRPC staff conducted project solicitation for this update from February-April 2023 and has updated the priority project list.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Infrastructure

# 10 Leverage SRPC's Brownfields Program to increase opportunities for facility rehabilitation, development and land acquisition and maintenance to strengthen and promote vibrant communities.

## Status Details:

SRPC's current EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant expired in September 2022. SRPC has applied for additional funds and anticipates EPA award decisions to be announced in May or June 2023.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

# 11 Consider people of all ages across all planning functions and promote opportunities for further information and resources.

## Status Details:

The Communities for Healthy Aging Transition (CHAT) project contributed to our understanding of how broad issues affecting our communities may have disproportionate impacts on certain age cohorts.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

## IN PROGRESS

# 1 Work with the SEDS to identify and promote best-practices for small businesses to attract and retain employees, including innovative marketing and hiring practices.

## Status Details:

In May 2023, SEDS group will start working on developing a universal business guide for small businesses that wish to grow or relocate to the region. This handbook will be available to municipalities and organizations that can develop it further and make it community specific for their use.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Resiliency

# 2 Analyze our region's broadband capabilities and plan for addressing identified weak points; specifics can include updates to the 2015 Broadband Plan, promotion of news and information related to broadband planning in New Hampshire, and direct technical assistance to municipalities seeking to improve their broadband access.

## Status Details:

SRPC staff updated coverage maps from publicly available data as part of the 2022 SRPC Data Snapshot (no available updated data for 2023). Staff will continue monitoring available data to provide updated analyses as data becomes available. Staff are watching NH BEA's broadband initiatives to identify a more substantial role for SRPC in the future.

### Relevant Themes

- ✓ Infrastructure



### **3 Maintain an up-to-date Regional Master Plan for the purpose of providing local and regional planning data to identify infrastructure needs and potential solutions.**

#### **Status Details:**

SRPC submitted this project for consideration in the Congressionally- Directed Spending round in 2021. SRPC was informed that our funding proposal was approved in early 2022, but as of this update the award process was not yet complete.

#### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Economic Growth
- ✓ Business Operations
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Mobility & Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Workforce & Education
- ✓ Community Vibrancy
- ✓ Childcare
- ✓ Resiliency

### **4 Plan for, study, advocate relationship between transportation and the built environment.**

#### **Status Details:**

SRPC is designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for our region and conducts various transportation planning initiatives as part of our Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Starting July 1, 2023, a new project with FTA funds is supposed to begin. SRPC will look at physical barriers to fixed route transit and the land use policy changes that can be proposed to help remedy those barriers. SRPC will work with Rockingham Planning Commission on the initiative over the next two fiscal years. We will continue to advocate for the economic benefits of transit service building off of the Economic Benefits of Transit study SRPC completed in 2021, and we are in the process of developing an Active Transportation plan that we will be presenting for adoption in July 2023 (see number 5 below).

#### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Mobility & Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

### **5 Increase the connectivity between communities by linking them with multi-modal infrastructure that includes public transit options and safe routes for bicycles and pedestrians.**

#### **Status Details:**

SRPC is designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for our region and conducts a variety of transportation planning initiatives as part of our Metropolitan Transportation Plan. SRPC is working on developing an Active Transportation plan which identifies and prioritizes pedestrian and bike sites. The document is expected to be adopted by late July 2023.

#### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Mobility and Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

## **6 Use Communities for Healthy Aging Transition (CHAT) action plans to inform all communities of possible opportunities.**

### **Status Details:**

The project is currently extending into its third year, in which SRPC completed 14 detailed age-friendliness profiles of member communities, with recommendations for future action items, and implementation of 2 pilot projects.

### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

## **7 Stay involved with food security issues and research potential funding sources.**

### **Status Details:**

SRPC continues to facilitate the Resiliency sub-committee where we continue to discuss various topics related to Food Systems Resilience.

### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

## **8 Create an interactive Arts and Culture web tool modeled on the highly successful POP! project.**

### **Status Details:**

SRPC is doing very minor edits on an as needed basis, but very little is going to change around the data as we do not currently have the resources to build out the tool for the entire region.

### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

## **9 Increase accessibility for people with disabilities by adding ramps, railings, curb cuts and platforms so that they can reach essential and leisure services.**

### **Status Details:**

No specific progress has been made beyond any improvements made in sidewalk construction and reconstruction projects.

### **Relevant Themes**

- ✓ Mobility & Accessibility
- ✓ Age Friendliness
- ✓ Community Vibrancy

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